Danger, Pleasure, and Arousal in the Tampa Lagoon

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Danger, Pleasure, and Arousal in the Tampa Lagoon

by lefemmerouge

Summary

One week after the assault on V.I.L.E. Island and the fight in Japan, Adora, assisted by the Crystal Gems, goes on a date with Carmen Sandiego in the Floridian Archipelago. In the process, they grow closer as friends, but emotional tension grows, and they confront a new danger in the Tampa Lagoon, unknowingly manipulated by a person far out of their reach...

Notes

I used a map of Mipsia and the Floridian Archipelago (see the beginning of the fic), along with my description of atolls and other information in the comments below that post, coupled with additional research. Also, the pages of Carmen Sandiego, Julia Argent, and Chase Devineaux on the Carmen Sandiego wiki, Mystery Girl and Last One Out of Beach City episode transcript on the Steven Universe wiki, and the pages for Entrapta and Perfuma on the She-Ra wiki. Also, some locations come from this map. I had considered adding this to the fic, after adding the aforementioned map, but decided against it after reading over the fic itself.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

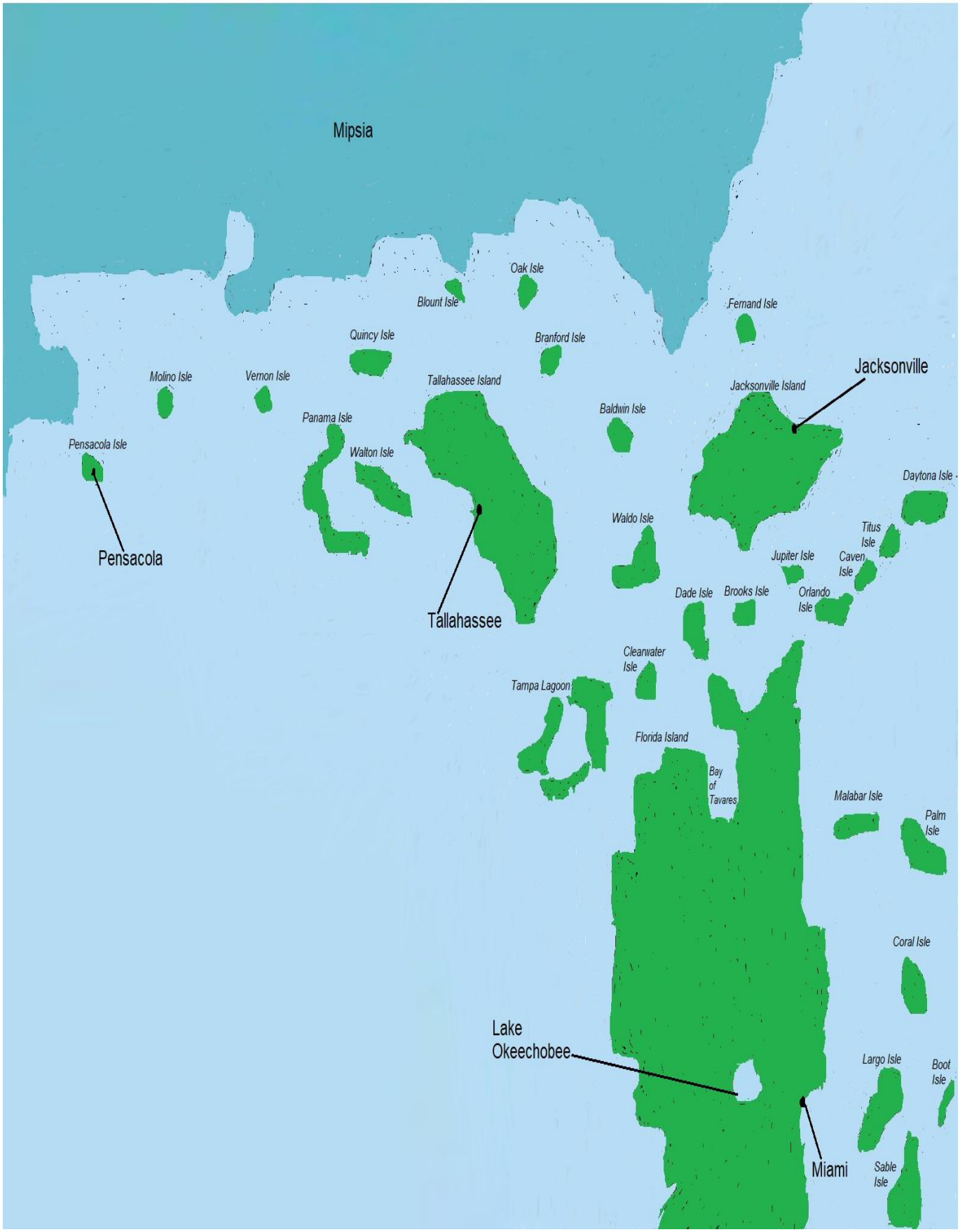
Update on 1/13/25: This fic has been changed to Teen and Up, as I would say it has mature parts, and does not make sense to be General Audiences. It was also cross-posted on Squidge World under the same name. As I noted in that repost, I thought about this fic *a lot* since I put it out there (it is part of the reason I decided to update this entire series) and as someone who favors Entrapta, even as some people slammed her for joining the Horde, I think the original version of this fic put her in a bad light. So, I added an unexpected twist instead. This required updating the fanfic timeline, affecting many other fics. The original version is on sites like Wattpad and Quotev. Entrapta continues to have an important role, but not in such a negative way. I think I wrote the original in order to reflect my own social awkwardness at the time, but the change still reflects that original intention. I have also made some changes to sentences, words, and other updates, replacing the previously flawed text. In my view the revisions make this fic much stronger, and I'm glad I made them.

Update on 3/19/26: Added my map of Mipsia and the Floridian Archipelago to the beginning of this fic (also added to the version on Squidge World). When I posted it on Reddit in December 2019, I said "...I took all the names of the islands from my 1973 mini pocket atlas. Most, if not all, are names of actual cities or towns in Florida...[in] my fan fic...Florida is an archipelago. Its been mentioned on there before, but no one has done a zoomed in map...until now" and I further said, in part: "after thinking about it for a while, the Tampa Lagoon couldn't be a coastal lagoon...but it would be more like an atoll...although the size of the islands would seen to put this in question, we can say that each of the islands were added too by unusual volcanic activity, making them bigger. As such, while calling it a lagoon is technically correct...it is actually an atoll...In this sense, it

would be misnamed by humans, because...it is uninhabited/deserted by human life, with humans only seeing it on maps. As such, properly it should be called the Tampa Atoll, but maps have not been fixed to rectify this error. Such atolls have rocky or sandy shores, a low-lying elevation, can be often hidden by ocean waves (not this one), often with white, sandy beaches and placid lagoons...That's probably where two of my characters will have their date."

See the end of the work for more notes

Mipsia and the Floridian Archipelago



My map of Mipsia and the Floridian Archipelago (created with Paint.Net I believe), published on Reddit in mid-November 2019, and later posted on Tumblr in early December 2019.

As the breeze flowed through the light yellow-green leaves of the white mangrove trees and the red mangroves to the white sandy coastline, Carmen sat in a beach chair. She relaxed, her auburn brown hair tied up, the sun beating down on her brownish skin, wearing blue shorts and a red-and-white v-neck t-shirt. Suddenly, she heard a whoosh and the flapping of wings.

Staring up, she saw Adora riding on Lapis's back, swoop down to the beach, amazing and awing her.

"Hey, Carm! Thanks *so much* for agreeing to do this. We brought some food, if that's cool…it's some vegetables that Anthy grew in her garden."

Carmen chuckled. She told her that was too generous to bring some food. She added, "I have some cut up coconut and banana which I gathered from the nearby trees on this lagoon…I mean atoll."

Lapis cleared her throat. She tried to remain authoritative. "Those humans that named this the 'Tampa Lagoon' *clearly* didn't know their geographical features. I bet we are the first ones ever here. I'll leave you to it. Adora, remember to *inform* me when you need me to fly you back to Beach City."

Adora jested her, calling her "MOM." Lapis snarled. She didn't like that name. "Ugh, *don't* call me that!" Adora explained she was just messing with her, with Lapis admitting she knew that... She wished they both had a good time. Adora waved and told Lapis she'd see her later.

Lapis fluttered her water wings and flew away, water droplets following her path. Adora felt a bit nervous about this date, as she had never been on one before. She wore something different from her usual attire, a white t-shirt, and jean shorts, with her hair in the same style she usually sported it. She worried that this date may have been hasty.

Sighing, she breathed deeply and remembered back to a conversation she had with the Gems. She remembered how Pearl put together a bulleted list on "everything" to know, but Steven warned her that Pearl wasn't the best person to give advice after *her experience* with the pink-haired girl. Amethyst said Pearl only succeeded after they "pushed her to make a glance when she rode alongside in a motorbike…and then she ran through a red light, chased by the police."

She also remember that after that Pearl chastised them both. Steven said that Pearl made "booty calls" with the phone number she had, which she got defensive about. He also wondered why she had a "candelabra, a cauldron, a cannon, a screwdriver, a stethoscope, tinfoil, a TV set, and cellophane" inside her Gem. She remarked that those tools could "someday" be useful.

Peri actually gave good advice, adding that Adora should be her "*true self* during the date, don't hide who you are. Don't be defined by your past…chart a course and head for the future. Experiment, explore!" Adora thanked her for the advice. Lapis told her that she should "be understanding of the other person," noting that she learned that with Peri, when their friendship became a relationship, "being honest with each other is important." Lapis realizing the latter the hard way. Bismuth, on the other hand, remained silent, not sure what to tell Adora.

Taking Adora's worries to heart, Connie decided to share what she knew. While Garnet planned to reply, as the physical embodiment of a relationship, she let Connie go first, listening intently, while she pettered a sleeping Pumpkin, which purred in her lap. She said that "you *have* to be honest and

understand her. Learn more about her story, where she is coming from, and talk about yourself, so she can get a feeling of who you are." They all hoped she had a good time and were glad to help, with Pearl even assisting her in choosing an outfit and charting out... everything on a chalkboard.

As the memories faded away, she smiled and chuckled. Carmen looked over with amazement. She entreated Adora, wanting to know why she was acting this way. "Adora, what's *so hilarious*?"

She was almost embarrassed to answer. She thought she wouldn't be interested. She then admitted that "the Gems *helped* me prepare for this date…with you."

Carmen called that sweet, asking if Lapis helped. Adora said she did, as did Peridot, Garnet, Connie, and Steven. Carmen then called Lapis great and said that she is beautiful, "seeing her soar through the air."

Adora shook her head. She wagged her finger in her direction. "Carmen! You *recognize* that Lapis is in a relationship with Peridot, right?"

Carmen apologized, saying she just found her so graceful that she couldn't help herself. Adora then let in on a secret: that she told Lapis to "fly into this atoll in an elegant way, so you'd *be impressed*."

This was something that Carmen hadn't expected. Adora had done this just to impress her? "You did that *for me*? Adora, that's so…*adorable*!" Their chattering led from one thing to another, with Adora blushing, saying how she is from a planet named Etheria, with Carmen interested because she had "never traveled through space or seen other worlds," stuck on Earth for her whole life.

Explaining her life story, Adora realized, would make Carmen *even more* interested in her. She decided to tell a little more about herself. "I was an orphan from another world…me and my parents crash-landed on Etheria over 17 years ago. *They were killed* by the Horde. It pains me to think about it..."

Adora sobbed, tears streaking down her cheeks like a waterfall flowing over a cliff. Carmen moved closer and hugged her. She tried to soothe her the best she could.

"Let it all come out, don't hide any part of yourself. I *made that mistake*…and I've worked all my life to undo it. I'd love to hear more about you."

As her crying subsided, she said she felt better. She continued her story.

"I grew up on Etheria and got taken in by the Horde, an evil marauding army, and had a *friendly rivalry* with a woman, Catra. I later left to get a magical sword in some magical woods and joined the Rebellion…we fought *against* the Horde to free the planet from *their* tyranny."

Carmen wondered whether she had turned her back on friends in the Horde. Adora shook her head. "I made new friends in the Rebellion such as the princesses, Glimmer, and Bow. I tried to get Catra to join me so we could be best friends again and she refused."

Carmen wanted to know *how* Adora had come to Earth in the first place. It seemed a bit unbelievable to her. She explained how the Crystal Gems had come to Etheria, how she had connected with Pearl, what fusion was, and how it was a bond between two beings that could be sexual or be between friends. Carmen probed as to whether Pearl liked Adora, and tried to get Adora to admit she liked her back, but she didn't admit that. In a bold move, Adora leaned in,

grabbing Carmen's t-shirt, pulling her closer, and *smooched her*. Shocked by this display of affection, she quickly pulled back. Her lips dripped with Adora's saliva.

This was something Carmen was *not okay* with. Adora had *not* asked her consent to do that. She made that clear.

"This is going *too fast* for me…I enjoy your company…but not in this way…I don't think…I'm ready for *a relationship* right now."

Adora tried to understand, asking why she agreed to the date, and apologizing profusely for her rash action, saying she wouldn't do anything like it again. Carmen admitted she agreed to the date because she wasn't going to "tell her no or admit in front of everyone I didn't understand what a date entailed."

Adora was surprised. She had expected that someone like Carmen had been on a date before. Carmen said that wasn't the case. The reason was that because of her upbringing, "we were taught to *suppress our emotions*. A crime school is no place to find love…" Adora admitted the same was the case in the Fright Zone, where they were taught that "emotion was awful and should never be expressed," only able to truly express herself after she left. They proceeded to eat the coconuts, bananas, and vegetables together. They had *bonded* over a shared experience.

Assembling a small low-hung table on the beach, Carmen and Adora ate the coconuts, bananas, and vegetables hungrily, sitting on beach towels they had brought for the occasion. It had been hours since their respective breakfasts and both needed to recharge. The Gems who didn't need to eat, such as Pearl and Garnet, or those that ate for pleasure (or other reasons) like Amethyst, Peridot, and Lapis, had no commonality with them, in this regard. Both of them were human beings, something they could connect with... together.

Turning to Adora, Carmen readied herself to make a *momentous revelation*. She hoped it would bring the two of them closer. "I have something to confess: Carmen Sandiego *isn't* the name I was born with." This made Adora intrigued. She wanted to know how Carmen got her name. She explained.

"I *stole* my overcoat and hat from the V.I.L.E. bookkeeper, and after leaving the island, my hacker friend, Player, requested my name... I glanced at the labels for 'Carmen Outerwear' which was made in San Diego…so I came up with the name 'Carmen Sandiego' on the spot, after all of that. It was really ingenious... I guess."

Adora wanted to know if Carmen had any family. Carmen shook her head. The answer was an obvious no because "I was raised on V.I.L.E. Island by a *revolving set of nannies* and taken away from my hometown of Buenos Aires, Tanyuga, once known as Argentina." She then said, after Adora suggested she quiz her former instructor, Shadowsan, about her parents, that she had "heard about DNA tests…being a former thief and all who has undoubtedly broken laws…I am wary of trusting *anyone* with my personal genetic information, especially *not* Genealogical Research Inc., GRI, who *might* give it to the authorities."

This didn't fully satisfy Adora's interest. She kept pushing. She said that Peridot could help her and everyone else could help her "discover your parentage and heritage." Carmen appreciated that because learning about her past was important to her. She added that Jules could help her because of the fact she is heading up that V.I.L.E. museum, explaining who she is in adoring detail:

"Jules is short for Julia Argent. She's a strapping young agent of A.C.M.E., about 20 years old, who has short-cut black hair, fair skin with freckles, and mixed Chinese and French heritage, *with a slender build*."

Adora kept prying. She wanted to know if they were friends and *how* she knew all this. Carmen sighed. "Oh, no, we aren't friends *yet*…we barely know each other, even less than I know you. My observations and Player's hacking helped me gain an understanding of her." She added that Jules had a partner named Chase Devineaux, a "brash, arrogant, and bumbling man…who believed that detective work is *worthless.*"

Later, when she worried about V.I.L.E.'s underground cells, ready to strike when the time is right, Adora reassured her. She wanted her to look into her past.

"You can't live in fear from something that could occur…with this threat gone, it is the *best opportunity* to learn more about your roots, birthplace, and parents. That is vital. I never knew my parents…you, Carmen, have a chance to take a leap that I could *never* do, as my parents had been killed. Hopefully, yours are still out there and... alive!"

Carmen stepped forward triumphantly. She felt very inspired. "You are right. I can't let the past dictate my life in the present! From now on, I am seeing forward, not back. And now…I'm *a new Carmen*."

She pulled off her shirt and shorts with one fell swoop, revealing a *red string bikini*. She dived into the lagoon, shallow but deep enough for a dive. Nervously, Adora stood on the beach biting her fingernails and twiddling her thumbs, not sure what to do. Carmen asked her to come in. "It's so nice, Adora, you should come in…the water's *warm*!"

Still unsure, Adora said, speaking in a low voice, "If you say so…*please* promise you won't laugh."

She slowly took off her t-shirt and shorts to reveal a tankini, with rainbow colors, like it had been tie-dyed, with a dark bluish bikini bottom. She tentatively stepped toward the water's edge. Carmen was caught off guard by her suit. "That is…a unique set of colors." She explained that Lapis and Peri had made it from hemp, then *tie-dyed it*. She then shouted. "WHOA!"

Carmen pulled her into the blueish water using her strong arms, shocking her with such boldness. She felt confused, not sure *why* Carmen had done this after saying a kiss was moving "too fast."

"What is this, Carm? I thought you stated we should move slower."

Carmen nodded. She would not contradict herself, especially when it came to something as important as consent.

"What I said about the kiss earlier is still true. But you were *bumming me out*, just standing there on the beach. You should be *having fun*! That's what this whole day is about."

Adora admitted she was right and then asked what Carmen was doing with the water...

Carmen began splashing her and Adora did the same. Both giggled and played around for some time, having a blast together. The day had gone a lot better than Adora had expected. Sure, she had rejected a kiss, an idea Lapis and Peridot *had suggested*. But, she could be a very good friend for

her, a confidante helping her adapt to a new post-V.I.L.E. lifestyle, and help her recover from her trauma in Japan (i.e. seeing her two friends turn into candy beings).

As they swam across the lagoon, Adora heard what sounded like a twig snapping. Scanning the tree line of the atoll's island reefs, she could see nothing other than white, sparkling sand illuminated by the warm sun. She ignored the echo, thinking she had been hallucinating. Maybe she was *too exhausted* or something. They moved back toward the shore, tired from horsing around. Carmen laid down on her red beach towel, loosening up, letting the water droplets dry off her skin. Adora prepared to do the same until a loud metallic sawing sound reverberated across the atoll. A coconut tree began to fall toward an unsuspecting Carmen!

Panicking, she rushed over and yelled the only words that had kept her friends safe, so, so many times: "For the Honor of Greyskull!" She expected to be killed by the falling tree. It would be a noble sacrifice to save someone... dear to her. But something magical transpired instead. She transformed into She-Ra. Her golden blonde hair blew in the wind and she easily threw aside the tree branch.

Abruptly opening her brown eyes, Carmen gazed at the light blue-eyed figure who towered above her. Blankly, she wondered what in the world was going on. "Adora...is that you?"

Blushing, she turned away, a little embarrassed of herself. She *didn't* want to hide anything from Carmen. "Sorry, I didn't tell you before, but I can turn into a badass warrior named She-Ra. I thought I needed the sword, but apparently...the magic is sill there...it's awesome!" She was wowed by She-Ra's hair, in *so many ways*. "I love your hair! Is it *always* this long and gorgeous?" She admitted that was the case and that she was used it... by now.

Taking out her hairpin, Carmen's brown hair draped down across her back and blustered in the wind. Gaping upward, she teased her ‘tall friend.' "That’s so cool. Is that…*why* you adore me, for my long brown hair?" Adora admitted that some of her friends said the same thing and that she was "*much more* of a person than what your hair looks like." Carmen appreciated the compliment and said the same thing applied to her, adding "the color or length of your hair doesn’t determine who you are as a person." Adora called that one of the "nicest things anyone had *ever* said about me."

A coconut tree began falling, but Adora stopped it, right after she switched back to her normal form. She fell to the sand, straddling Carmen’s body on the red towel, sitting over her legs in a very suggestive way. Her cheeks getting as red as a Macintosh apple, she politely requested Adora move. "Uh, this is awkward. Remember what I said about...moving *too fast*." Adora crawled back quickly. She apologized, saying she did it "subconsciously."

Carmen was okay with that, on the proviso that this was a *learning experience*. She thanked Adora for saving her from a falling coconut tree. Confused, Adora noted that the atoll had "*been uninhabited* since its creation, based on books I read about the history of the Floridian Archipelago in the local Beach City public library." After hearing some mechanical whirring, Carmen and Adora decided to investigate.

Reaching over to her red leather purse, Carmen pulled out her compact mirror tracker, which scanned the entire atoll for any movement. As it sent out electronic beeps, looking for heat signatures, nothing came up. She shook her head, doubting its results. "This is so strange. My device isn't detecting anything but there's obviously *something* out there."

Adora declared they should search the atoll *themselves*. Carmen yelped that the place was so big that they would "*never* be able to cover all the ground," even when they worked together. Adora sighed. "Don't you have any other snappy devices in your purse?" Carmen showed how useful she was. She explained all of the stuff in her bag.

"I have a hard drive disguised as lipstick, a laser cutter, a grappling hook, and binoculars. Not sure if *any* of those will help…Oh, I also have a flying drone that can be remotely controlled with a tablet *I happen* to have in my bag."

Adora's eyes lit up. She knew what to do. She wanted to use the drone. Carmen lamented that her teammate who usually used it was ... gone, saying that Player could help. Adora dissuaded her from that. While she had never flown a drone before, Carmen agreed to help her. It was *the least* she could do.

After putting on their regular beach clothes, Carmen showed Adora how to guide Red Drone through the mangrove trees and gave her the directions. After some fooling around, she got the hang of it. She faced her first challenge. Through its eye, she spotted a small globe-shaped object hovering on the atoll's edges, with a small antenna and an assortment of cameras, one at the center of its structure. Hiding from view they heard it sharing a message: "Subjects sited in beach area. Observation complete. Commencing next stage of operation. Awaiting further commands."

As it began moving away, Red Drone began following it, occasionally hiding behind mangrove and coconut trees to stay out of vision. Unfortunately, Adora slipped up and the hovering probe *saw them*. A mechanical voice blared out: "Unidentified object sighted. Engaging in defensive maneuvers."

Laser cannons began firing every which way, almost hitting Red Drone. Carmen and Adora worked together to ensure no damage was done. Without warning, *everything* began to shake like an earthquake. An inter-dimensional gateway opened in the sky, with a hand, with what looked like a welder's glove on, reached through and flicked some sparkling essence. They could hear a voice ask if the "experiment" worked as the portal closed. Since Red Drone wasn't nearby, the unidentified object took the brunt of the dust, causing it to fall to the ground.

Carmen demanded they approach it to... learn more, while Adora warily pointed out the danger. As she hesitated, Carmen tightly grabbed her hand and ran through the mangroves at full speed, pulling her behind. She struggled to keep up, astonished by Carmen's determination. In no time at all, they reached the wrecked machine. Carmen got closer, taking out her laser cutter to dissect it, but its electronic eye saw her, beginning a countdown: “Thank you for initiating the self-destruct mechanism. This probe will self-destruct in 30 seconds. 30. 29. 28. 27. 26. 25. 24. 23. 22. 21…”

As destruction seemed imminent, Adora tried to pull Carmen away. But she refused to stop, declaring she only needed a few more seconds. Taking matters into her own hands, Adora picked up the probe and threw it into the ocean. A few seconds later the probe exploded and showered them with water droplets. Carmen and Adora lay on the ground. They laughed in unison as the probe's metal shards landed around them. Feeling guilty, Carmen sullenly admitted her mistake. "Adora, thanks for saving me…*again*. I should have listened when you said I should stop. I just felt *so excited* to learn something new…"

Adora couldn't be angry at Carmen. She wanted to make up with her. "I get it. I had a…*former friend*…Entrapta…who tinkered with inventions and scientific experiments…she *never* seemed to care about what her experiments did to others…or the planet. I'm not saying you are like her, but

feeling that the probe should be analyzed shows you have *some* of her characteristics…in a good way." Carmen asked Adora if she'd like them to go back to the beach, where they could calm down and get some suntan. Excitedly, Adora chirped. "Sure, I'm up for that, I'm up for anything!"

A voice cackled. The keyboard could be heard clacking, typing away like a fiend. This princess was operating from the Dryl laboratory, where she was living now. It was more pertinent than helping the Archives of Etheria secure their historical artifacts and objects. She brought a recorder up to her mouth. She began speaking.

"Log day 9. The social experiment is going better than I ever imagined. Spoofing the hacker was tough, but it ensured that the brown-haired lady, calling herself 'Carmen Sandiego' would meet with those Gems...who helped bring the new 'order' to this planet. I may not... be able to make friends very well, but I can watch those that are experienced… to help improve myself.

'Adora displayed extraordinary courage today in saving Carmen…more than I would have expected…I didn't know she could transform into She-Ra without her sword…that is fascinating, something I will have to test... later.

'The loss of a probe is unfortunate, from some magic dust…but luckily I had a few others on standby, able to watch this 'Carmen' figure and Adora from afar. This is so exciting! Creating social situations in the name of science and discovery is the next frontier... I need to conquer.

Putting down the recorder, she slouched in her chair and stared at the screen above her. She tapped the screen. She displayed the status of her spying on the Gems and their friends across Earth. It had grown to become a very extensive operation. She desired an update from one of her 30 probes on the planet.

"Probe 2, what is the status of Beach City and the Gems?

"No new activity to report, other than a water-winged figure leaving the house at 0900 hours, with a blonde-haired figure riding on her back.

'Thank you for sharing your observations, Probe 2. Return to normal scanning.

'Affirmative. Returning to usual surveillance.

Turning off the viewing screen, she got up from her chair. Walking around Dryl, she contemplated if spying on the Gems, Adora, and their friends, while engineering certain social situations *was wrong*. She didn't know anymore, as the world seemed mystifying to her now, following the death of Hordak, the destruction of the Fright Zone destroyed, and the Horde leaders on trial for their many crimes. Walking in the castle courtyard, a hand touched her shoulder, catching her off guard. Maybe she wasn't *supposed* to be here. Oops. She had made an error.

The other woman looked at her, clearly infuriated. "Why are you here?... and why are you*...dressed like me*?...what in the world is going on?" She struggled to answer. How could she explain this? How could she admit what she had done? Shaking her head, the other woman pulled her back in the laboratory in record speed. She had thought that this other woman was at the Archives of Etheria, helping them secure objects and artifacts. She couldn't be more wrong.

"What are you doing with *my* welding mask on... and what's with this hair?...why is it pinkish and prehensile...like mine?" Pulling down her visor, she revealed who she really was: Perfuma. The

plant matter she had made into hair which somewhat resembled the prehensile hair of this castle's usual occupant. She tried to apologize. She *wanted* to say she was sorry for what she did. And she did exactly that.

"I'm so, so sorry Entrapta...I didn't think you would come back so soon...I've struggled with human contact...and I started this experiment on Earth...but I'm not sure I should continue it."

This was something the geeky princess understood. Her robots and inventions here kept her company and she also has trouble making friends. She hadn't expected that Perfuma would be the same way. After all, wasn't she pretty outgoing? This whole thing threw her completely for a loop. And when did Perfuma get so good with technology? When did that happen? She demanded to know more.

Growling, she castigated Perfuma. "What have you done...exactly? And with *my* tech? What have you started?"

Sheepishly replying, she told the whole story. She had created social situations without people knowing, but wasn't sure if it was right to *watch* people. She also shared that she had put out false information about an imminent attack by an evil organization on this beach town [Beach City], so that an international thief, with flowing brown hair, would visit, meet these Gem people. If that wasn't enough, she had messed around so that Adora and the thief would get romantically closer. She asked if this was too much meddling. Entrapta didn't know what to tell her.

What *could* she tell her? How could she break this to her? How could she do this? She struggled with what would be the *right* thing to say. She was never good at conversations like these.

"You shouldn't be *spying* on people, Perfuma. People should be able to make their own choices without interference from anyone else...I don't want you to make the same mistake I did."

Perfuma thought about it a bit. Perhaps the other woman was right. She began to apologize. She declared that the experiment should *end* and said she only wanted to learn more about other people so she could better *herself* and make friends, but had become too wrapped up in the whole thing. Entrapta further suggested that she stop meddling with their lives.

Maybe the voyeuristic element of seeing lives of other people had drawn Perfuma in, or maybe something else, and she couldn't pull herself away. Entrapta tried to walk away. She didn't want to get involved in this. She wanted to be *different* now, to respect other people. After abandoning her in the Fright Zone and understanding her admission of guilt, she aimed to forgive and put the past behind her, in a world without the Horde in it. When Perfuma asked her if she wanted to be her lab partner, she shook her head. "I'm not sure about this. Having a good friend like you is *enough*."

Even so, this whole thing confused Entrapta. She began scratching her head with her hair. As they sat in the lab, her quirkiness could be seen, as it could throughout the entire labyrinth of the castle. The lab had its own internal organization. Robots made tiny snacks and fizzy drinks in the same room as she did her work. No people could be seen *anywhere.*

Entrapta began speaking with such vigor. "Oh, I forgot to mention, this *whole castle* is automated. I used to have a human staff, but I don't need them as everything can be done by robots. They do filing, cleaning, basic hygiene, and now cooking and food preparation. Isn't it great?" She then added, still curious, "I thought you were really talkative, so I didn't think you had any issues with social interaction."

Perfuma shook her head. People may have thought that, but those outward expressions only went so far. She could only do so much. She sighed, as she explained.

"From a young age, I've been the princess of Plumeria. I started off really shy but I could never command the attention of my subjects...so I *trained* myself to talk more...at heart I am a gregarious introvert...I think you'd understand, Entrapta...after all, you are pretty socially awkward yourself."

She knew that the flower princess was right. She could relate in more ways than one. As she thought about what to say, she called out to the Robot Butler. "Make a fizzy drink and snack for our guest." The Robot Butler responded, saying "Yes, ma'am. Commencing food and drink preparation. Food and drink completed." As she began to hand it over to Perfuma, she tried to connect with her a little more.

"I don't have the same experience as you...but I understand what you are saying, Perfuma...and I don't want to see the videos of your...experimentation, but will you *at least* share your observations?"

She gleefully smiled as flowers began to flow out of her hair and around the laboratory. This wasn't what Entrapta was used to, but she was willing to tolerate it for now. Perfuma explained how Adora went on a date with that female thief she had mentioned, said they "had a grand old time" and noted that at one point, Adora even kissed that other woman. She said hat shocked her from what she knew about Adora. She called that riveting maybe because she didn't think Adora had that in her because Earth had changed her. Entrapta started taking copius notes and tried to figure out the social relationships in her head. If someone was going to share their observations, the least she could do would be to take notes. Perhaps someday they might... prove useful... or maybe not. Perfuma explained *more* about what she had seen that day and before.

Sitting down in another extra swivel chair, she *would* have watched the video that had been recorded earlier that day. But Entrapta shook her head. She did not want to. As she appeared glum, a thought came into Perfuma's head. She suggested they sing about what she'd talked about. Entrapta admitted she had not sung anything before. Perfuma said that is fine, and that she could follow her lead. Entrapta said she could generate a beat.

Entrapta ensured that the beat of this song would move up in tempo as it progressed. This began with very soft music.

'I call this the 'Ballad of Carmen and Adora':

Adora swooped to the beach/

she was out of reach/

flying on the back of a 'water wing goddess'/

Carmen saw her and was transfixed but modest/

Adora said hello/

Carmen's face began to glow/

As the song continued, turning into a rock ballad (made with electronic sounds), they harmonized together. Entrapta felt she had found her equal, from whom she could understand friendship, due to their shared social awkwardness (which came in different forms) despite its hurdles. Perfuma gave her hope for the future. After completing it, they listened to it and danced together in the lab, holding each other's hands for support, as pink rose petals floated around the room. Entrapta had the sense she had met someone who enjoyed her company, unlike the other princesses.

Back in the Tampa Lagoon, falsely named by foolish humans, Carmen and Adora were *ready* to call it quits. They had *enough* of the meddling by outside forces, close calls at an injury, or even death, and some lingering...awkwardness. Beaming, Carmen approached Adora, ready to give her farewells.

"Although this excursion didn't go as I thought it would…I *still* want to be friends with you…if you type your number into my phone, then I'll do the same with yours."

While this sounded great, Adora lamented her situation. "That would be fine, but this is Pearl's phone, not mine. She let me *borrow it*. I've been on Earth such a short time I haven't picked up *my own* phone yet."

Carmen smiled. This didn't bother her. "Since you and Pearl *are close*…I'll get in contact with you through that number."

Adora agreed to that. In no time at all, they said their goodbyes, with Adora telling Carmen she'd see her "on the sunny side."

Carmen took off with a running start, her hang glider allowing her to soar across the vast Atlantic Ocean. She flew en route to Lyons, France, where she was to meet Jules to learn about the progress at recovering the V.I.L.E. data from V.I.L.E. Island. While doing so, she phoned Player, who excitedly answered her call. "Red, how'd the *date* go?"

Carmen explained that it "was a lovely location and I had a wonderful time with Adora…I think we are becoming better friends, which is the *first step*."

Player was glad to hear this. He had wished the best for her. "Oh, that's great. Did she put *any moves* on you?"

She scolded Player for saying something like that. She admitted that Adora "did assertively kiss me once and accidentally landed around my legs suggestively…On the other hand, I pulled her into the water and through the woods to check out this probe we found…I have to thank her for saving me multiple times."

Player was surprised, saying that was more than what he expected. She explained that she told Adora she'd like to move slowly, the probe which almost blew up in her face.

Player said he'd "search online and in the V.I.L.E. data files to see if there is a match" and would let her know the results. She wished Player "a great rest of this delightful day," with Player saying it was rainy and gloomy, admitting he'd rather "play one of those multiplayer first-person shooter games *with Peridot*." They both said they'd talk, again, soon.

As the conversation ended, Carmen let her fears melt away, closing her eyes, as she drifted across the sea, flying through the sky. Meanwhile, in Beach City, Adora had a wholly *different* experience.

The Gems peppered her with questions, especially Garnet, Pearl, Lapis, and Peri, about how the date went, and she nervously didn't answer them.

"Adora, *why* aren't you saying anything? After I let you take *my phone* and helped you plan the date in the Floridian Archipelago…I…we would *like* to hear at least something about it," Pearl asked.

Taking the comment as insulting, her temper began to flare. She spit fire, metaphorically, at them. She excoriated them for how they had responded her. "Pearl…Lapis…Peri…Garnet…and everyone else…If you must know…I enjoyed myself and had a great time…that is all…*are you happy now*?"

Pearl tried to calm down the emotions. "…you don't have to be *so angry*, Adora…we just…" Adora grumbled. She knew they meant well. "I understand you are *trying* to be supportive and I appreciate that…the questioning is too much for me right now…I had a long day and *I'm tired*." She soon began explaining to all of them what happened, how Carmen thought of Lapis as her girlfriend, that had kissed Carmen (but did so hastily), how Camen pulled her into the water and they played around, and the drone which spied on them. She ended by saying "we relaxed on the beach in our swimsuits…and entered our numbers into each other's phones at the end. That's the gist of the 'date' as you call it."

Handing the phone back to Pearl, she proceeded to swipe her finger across the lock screen. She could see Carmen seductively looking into the camera, her eye twinkling and blowing a kiss in the photo associated with her contact information. After everything Adora had explained, it didn't add up. "Adora…what is she doing!...is she *trying* to be provocative?"

Adora was just as confused as her. "I…don't know…though she said I was going 'too fast,' she *might* have a soft spot for me."

Amethyst snickered. "In other words, she hit on you during the date."

This line of questioning seemed out of order for Adora. She tried to counter it. "No, Amethyst, she didn't *physically strike* me."

Amethyst could not believe how much of human lingo that Adora didn't get. Sometimes she forgot that Adora came from another planet and wasn't originally from Earth. She didn't understand these phrases. "I don't mean physically…I mean she *openly displayed* her attraction toward you."

Adora understood now. She agreed with what the purple gem had said. "Oh…she *definitely* did that. I did the same, as I didn't hide my feelings."

As the sun began to set, everyone *turned in* to sleep. They didn't want to stay up later or turn electric lights on. They ran on what they called "Beach Time."

Exhausted, Adora lied down on the couch. Beginning to drift off to sleep, she unexpectedly felt a strong tug on her arm. With a playful grin, Pearl *teased her*: "You don't want to go to sleep right?...I'd like to talk you…outside." Not in a position to argue, Adora went along with her request, and they snuck out the front screen door. Running down the wooden stairway to the beach, Pearl pulled Adora behind her, like Carmen had done, during their date that day.

Sitting on the sand together, the ocean waves tranquilly moved in and out with the tides. Sometimes, you could even forget that the Moon's gravitational field determined whether the water

would be at high or low tide, thinking the oscillating of waves was natural to the planet itself, not determined by any outside forces.

Breathing deeply, Pearl turned to Adora. "After hearing about that 'date' you had with Carmen today in the Tampa Lagoon…I've been thinking *a lot* about our relationship."

Adora only uttered one word in response: "Relationship?"

Pearl continued. "Yes…we've known each other long enough…this friendship has come to an end…"

Adora looked at her with complete terror and bewilderment. She *didn't want* their friendship to end!

Pearl wanted to be as clear as possible. She told Adora that a "new chapter is beginning…one where we express *our true feelings* for each other."

Adora wasn't sure where this was going. She was a bit scared. Pearl kept pouring her heart out.

"I had a realization which I had been afraid to admit because I had *a fear of losing you*…as you know, the last person dear to my heart, Rose, *left me* for a long-haired human…a feeling of loss that still resides within me…although I have recovered from it, sometimes it resurfaces in moments of pain and anguish."

She then said the line which sealed the deal: "Having said all that...there's something I need to get off my chest and state loudly...and proudly...I...*LOVE you*, Adora!"

Relieved, she reciprocated her feelings, completely. "Pearl…I *love you* too! I…"

Pearl came close and whispered the words, "hush now…let's enjoy this moment."

Their heads tilted toward each other, and eyes closed, they passionately kissed one another. Their blonde and peach hair blew in the gentle breeze... together. They were now romantically intertwined *with one another.*

Ending a tender embrace, Pearl held Adora's head in her lap, as both gazed up *at the dazzling Moon*.

"I think the world of you, and I cherish this planet!...Isn't that moonlight *spectacular*?"

Pearl replied, "yes, Adora, it's magnificent and I treasure you *too*."

They remained together, staring into the starry night sky, at the grand cosmos above. They held each other's hands as they sat on the beach, letting the fine sand touch their toes, ready for whatever challenges may be ahead.

End Notes

This fic also marks the *end* of the Pearl/Adora slow-burn, as they begin a romantic relationship.

Perfuma's probe is based on the Sith Probe Droid from The Phantom Menace, as its compact and easy to launch. The scene of dancing in the rose petals is inspired by one of the final scenes of "Day 1: Dove -Heart," the first episode of a 2007 three-part anime directed by Makoto Kobayashi, known as Ice, when the guardian, Hitomi Landsknecht, sits with Yuki Ice-T, in a field of flowers, a touching scene, especially since Yuki clearly has a crush on Hitomi, a lesbian sub-story, with Hitomi also reciprocating some of those feelings. Interestingly, the head of a large group of female warriors, Julia, is described as a lesbian, since she engages in sexual acts with some of the warriors, but not Yuki, weirdly.

Additionally, Adora's position over Carmen's body is a reference to "Too Far," a Season 2 Steven Universe episode when Peridot does the same to Amethyst "by accident." When Carmen says Lapis looks beautiful in the sky, this refers to fangirlforlife23's comic dub, "I Love my Roomie," where Peridot says the same about Lapis. The only difference here is that Peridot says she "loves" Lapis, while Carmen does not say the same about her. But there is a parallel here without a doubt. Also, Kathy Steinmann's "600+ Ways to Describe Lips and Mouths: A Word List for Writers" provided some guidance, although I employed my own form of organization. I also used tips by Lililoveschampagne on "An (Incomplete) Guide to AO3 Tags" to help add new and exciting tags to this story.

Works inspired by this one

Rise of the Scarlet Wildcat by lefemmerouge

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